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RAILWAY ACCIDENTS.

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, October 16, 1855.*

East Lancashire
Railway.

SIR,

Collision at Sum-
merseat.

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you the enclosed copy of the report made by Lieut.-Colonel Yolland, R.E., the officer appointed by their Lordships to inquire into the circumstances which attended the collision, that occurred on the 27th ultimo, at Summerseat, on the East Lancashire Railway.

My Lords trust that the recommendation of their inspecting officer as to the distant signal at Brooksbottom will be adopted, but they request me to observe, that it would appear from the description of this portion of line, as given in the report, that accidents of this nature might be obviated by the use of the electric telegraph, as suggested in the circular letter from this department of the 12th August 1854, and they will be glad to learn the views of the Directors on the subject.

I am, &c.

*The Secretary of the
East Lancashire Railway Company.*

DOUGLAS GALTON,
Captain Royal Engineers.

(Enclosure.)

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
2, Parliament Street, October 11, 1855.*

SIR,

IN compliance with the instructions of the 29th ultimo, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances connected with the collision which occurred at Summerseat, on the East Lancashire Railway, on the 27th September.

It appears that a special goods train, consisting of 28 waggons, proceeding from Haslingden to Bury, left Ramsbottom at 12.14 p.m., and stopped at the Company's warehouse at Brooksbottom, 431 yards north of the Summerseat Station, for the purpose of bringing on a waggon standing in a siding at that place; and one of the Company's servants, a lad of 16, son of the station-master, who had for several years performed the duty, unfastened the catch and let go the lever which turns the north distant disc signal from "danger" to "all right," and which, being weighted to stand at "danger," should assume that position as soon as the lever was let go. The object of letting the lever go was to protect the tail of the train whilst the waggon was taken out of the siding and attached to the train. According to this lad's statement, this occurred at 12.29, but it is impossible to reconcile this with the goods train having left Ramsbottom at 12.14. This distant signal is placed at the north end of a tunnel (No. 2) of 400 yards in length, and 705 yards distant from the lever by which it is worked, and it can be seen, in clear weather, by a train proceeding to Bury, when about one-fourth of the way through a short tunnel (No. 1) of 120 yards in length, which lies 129 yards north of tunnel No. 2.

As soon as this lever was let go, there does not seem to be any doubt that the signal porter, and the persons connected with the goods train, had every reason to suppose that all had been done that was necessary to protect the train; and, with the exception of the second guard, who was sitting in the van at the rear of the train, 520 yards inside the distant signal, they were occupied in getting the waggon out of the siding, and in backing it to the other part of the train standing on the main line, when the 11.55 a.m. passenger train from Accrington to Manchester, appointed to stop at Summerseat Station, at 12.32, emerged from the south end of tunnel (No. 2), whilst travelling at the rate of about 20 miles an hour, down an incline of 1 in 132, and immediately

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merseat.

afterwards ran into the goods van standing about 120 yards south of the mouth of the tunnel No. 2, destroyed the guard's break van, killing the second guard on the spot, severely hurt the guard of the passenger train, and knocked about or severely shook eight of the passengers. Two of the waggons of the goods train were much damaged, and a third was thrown off the line into the six feet space, and blocking the down line.

The driver, fireman, and guard of the passenger train all distinctly state that the distant signal was at "all right" as they approached and passed it from Ramsbottom Station, which is 1,364 yards north of this distant signal, and which place they left at 12.29 p.m., without having received any caution that a special goods train was in front of them; and it was not until the passenger train was coming out of tunnel No. 2, just after the guard had released the catch of Newall's patent break, with which the train was fitted, to allow it to become self-acting to a certain extent, in the usual manner for stopping at Summerseat Station, that the driver saw that there were waggons on the line in front, but he was unable to stop before the collision occurred, although the tender break was applied and the engine reversed.

Immediately after the collision the driver of the passenger train ran back along the line, at the desire of the guard, to Ramsbottom, to prevent other trains from coming on, and he says that the disc signal was, as he passed it, only three-fourths on to "danger."

The superintendent of the line examined the condition of this distant signal, which cannot be seen by the person who moves the lever, owing to the curved nature of the line, and to its passing through the tunnel No. 2, on the afternoon of the 27th ult., and he was then under the impression that the signal worked in a satisfactory manner; but the general manager having directed that a more special examination of this signal should again be made by the superintendent, it was found during the evening of the same day, that when the lever was let go the disc signal did not, in many instances, turn more than one-fourth round, or about 22½° instead of 90°, and that it varied according to the manner in which it was worked.

I am of opinion that the cause of this very unfortunate accident was owing to a failure in the working of this distant signal, and not to any neglect of duty on the part of the Company's servants employed with either of those trains, or the signal porter at Summerseat; but I think a caution should have been given by the station-master at Ramsbottom to the guard and driver of the passenger train that a special goods train had recently left that station.

And, as the nature of the ground does not admit of the distant signal being seen by the man who works the lever at Brooksbottom, I would suggest that their Lordships should recommend the Directors of the East Lancashire Railway Company to make the circuit of the wire continuous from the lever to the disc signal, and thence back to the lever, by which the porter will at all times know if the movement of the lever causes the signal to turn to "danger."

I was glad to find that the East Lancashire Railway Company had added Newall's patent break to all their passenger trains. I do not profess, from the cursory examination I was enabled to make of this break, to give any opinion of its actual merits; but I am perfectly satisfied that it is correct in principle to endeavour to apply break power to every carriage and wheel that runs, rather than to one or two particular carriages at one or either extremity of a train. This patent break also serves as a means of communication between engine-driver and guard.

I have, &c.

To Captain Galton, R.E.
&c. &c.

W. YOLLAND,
Lieut.-Colonel Royal Engineers.

East Lancashire Railway, Secretary's Department,
Bury, Lancashire, October 18, 1855.

SIR,

Collision at Summerseat on the 27th ult.

REFERRING to your communication of the 16th inst., and the report of Lieut.-Colonel Yolland which accompanied it, I am instructed by the Directors to state that it is their intention to apply the magnetic telegraph between Summerseat and Ramsbottom, in the manner suggested by the Board of Trade

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in their circular of the 12th of August 1854, and that they also intend to carry out the suggestion of Lieut.-Colonel Yolland with respect to making the circuit of the wire continuous from the lever to the disc signal and thence back to the lever.

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merseat.

Captain Galton, R.E.
&c. &c.

I have, &c.

JAMES SMITHELLS,
Secretary.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY.

North Eastern
Railway.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, October 12, 1855.*

SIR,

Accident near Ay-
cliffe to William
Haigh, while en-
gaged in greasing
the axle of one of
the carriages of
the train which
was conveying The
Queen to Scot-
land.

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you the enclosed copy of the report of the inspecting officer appointed by their Lordships to inquire into the circumstances attending the fatal accident that occurred on the 6th ultimo, near Aycliffe, on the North Eastern Railway, to William Haigh, a greaser in the service of the Great Northern Railway Company, whilst he was engaged in greasing or examining the axles of one of the carriages of the train which was conveying The Queen to Scotland.

My Lords trust that the observations of the inspecting officer will receive the careful consideration of the Directors of the North Eastern Railway Company.

My Lords are glad to receive from this report a confirmation of that of which, however, they had had no doubt, that the Companies to whom has been committed the care of conveying Her Majesty from London to Scotland, have exercised this duty with the greatest solicitude for the safety of the Royal Train.

But my Lords concur with the inspecting officer in thinking that it is not desirable to resort to the use of exceptional methods for attaining this object, which may have a tendency to introduce new and unforeseen elements of danger, as has happened on the present occasion: and they direct me to observe, that if the particular kind of grease which was selected for the Royal Train had been sufficiently tested and found to be superior to that in ordinary use, it should have been employed with all trains; if, on the other hand, the Company had not had full experience of its merits, it ought not have been used on The Queen's journey.

My Lords are also of opinion that the whole responsibility of the arrangements for the working of the Royal Train should rest with the Company upon whose line for the time being the train is travelling.

My Lords observe that, in the instructions issued by the general manager of the North Eastern Railway, allusion is made to a mode of communication between the guards and engine-driver of the Royal Train.

My Lords request to be informed what this mode of communication was, and whether the same mode or some other is in use on all trains on the North Eastern Railway.

*The Secretary of the
North Eastern Railway Company.*

I am, &c.

DOUGLAS GALTON,
Captain Royal Engineers.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, October 12, 1855.*

SIR,

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you the enclosed copy of the report of the inspecting officer appointed by their Lordships to inquire into the circumstances attending the fatal accident that occurred on the 6th ult., near Aycliffe, on the North-Eastern Railway, to William Haigh, a greaser in the service of the Great Northern Railway Company, whilst he was engaged in greasing or examining the axles of one of the carriages of the train which was conveying The Queen to Scotland.

My Lords trust that the observations of the inspecting officer will receive the careful consideration of the Directors of the Great Northern Railway Company.